

Introduction

The Indiana Department of Education, Division of Language Minority and Migrant Programs and the Indiana English as a Second Language (ESL) Task Force are pleased to present English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards to Indiana educators. These collaboratively created ELP Standards are linked to Indiana's academic content standards by each grade level. The Indiana English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards advocate that all students must have standards that are intellectually rigorous, attainable, and equitable.

Standards for Teachers and Parents

The Indiana ELP Standards recognize that many language minority students spend most of their day in a mainstream academic setting in English. The ELP standards are intended as a working instrument for mainstream classroom and content-area teachers, as well as related ESL staff and/or bilingual staff who seek to apply meaningful standards that guide and support their daily instruction of English/language arts. Further, it is a tool that parents of language minority students may use to support their academic progress and English language acquisition.

There are a multitude of variables that impact the pace and progress language minority students make in their journey to develop academic concepts and acquire English. This unique condition further promotes the need to develop concrete and thorough English proficiency standards that are differentiated for the needs of Indiana's ESL students.

Instructional Differentiation

As the ELP standards model the performance behavior expected of language minority students, it is important to note that a low-stress environment must be facilitated by the teachers and students, especially in the initial stages of English language learning (Krashen, 1982). This low-stress and nurturing environment is also facilitated by differentiated instructional approaches. Reading the standards for each proficiency level and a given grade level may sometimes direct the teacher to explicitly provide students with those opportunities to demonstrate the standard. It is expected that a language minority student will be able to perform more of the standards independently as he or she acquires more English. However, the teacher's role in evaluating the need to instruct directly or to be a facilitator in student demonstration of skills is critical in the consideration of the English Language Proficiency standards.

Second Language Learning Considerations

Second language acquisition research has demonstrated that there are two dimensions of language proficiency to be considered for language minority students: Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins, 1981).

Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS) is the social dimension of language that demonstrates a student's ability to converse socially with teachers, peers, and others. It is a very concrete aspect of language and takes less than three years to demonstrate near-native-like proficiency with BICS.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the more abstract dimension of language that includes being able to read, write, and perform within a content-area classroom at grade level. Sometimes, it is assumed that proficiency in BICS is equated with performance in CALP. Oral production in English does not always equate with academic production in English.

The ELP Standards strongly address the CALP dimension of second language learning. Each ELP standard illustrates the need for ESL students to use their new language for social and academic purposes from the beginning levels of proficiency to fluent English proficiency.

Language Minority Students: Who Is Our Population?

A language minority student is any child whose home environment, native language, and/or background is other than English. Within that description, children may be considered limited English proficient (LEP) or fluent English proficient (FEP). They move along a continuum from limited English proficiency to fluent English proficiency.

Limited English Proficient

A student whose native language is other than English and is limited in listening, speaking, reading, and writing of English.

Fluent English Proficient

A student whose native language is other than English and listens, speaks, reads, and writes with near English fluency.

| ELP Level | ELP Description | ELP Descriptor |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Level 1 | Beginner | Limited English Proficient (LEP) |
| Level 2 | Early Intermediate | Limited English Proficient (LEP) |
| Level 3 | Intermediate | Limited English Proficient (LEP) |
| Level 4 | Advanced | Limited English Proficient (LEP) |
| Level 5 | Fluent English Proficient | Fluent English Proficient (FEP) |

*For information on determining a student's level of English proficiency, see page v.

English Language Proficiency Levels

The English Language Proficiency descriptions have been revised to reflect the abilities and skills that students are capable of demonstrating at each level. It further details distinctions between levels, to ensure children are being appropriately scaffolded to meet their academic and English language learning needs. Additionally, the descriptor utilized reflects one that is additive in nature and does not describe the student as having a deficit. All language minority students have the capacity to learn, despite their potentially low level of English proficiency.

Indiana's New English Language Proficiency Levels

Beginner (Level 1):

Students performing at this level of English language proficiency begin to demonstrate receptive or productive English skills. They are able to respond to some simple communication tasks.

Early Intermediate (Level 2):

Students performing at this level of English language proficiency respond with increasing ease to more varied communication tasks.

Intermediate (Level 3) :

Students performing at this level of English language proficiency tailor the English language skills they have been taught to meet their immediate communication and learning needs. They are able to understand and be understood in many basic social situations (while exhibiting many errors of convention) and need support in academic language.

Advanced (Level 4):

Students performing at this level of English language proficiency combine the elements of the English language in complex, cognitively demanding situations and are able to use English as a means for learning in other academic areas, although some minor errors of conventions are still evident.

Fluent English Proficient (Level 5):

Students performing at this level of English language proficiency communicate effectively with various audiences on a wide range of familiar and new topics to meet social and academic demands. Students speak, understand, read, write, and comprehend English without difficulty and display academic achievement comparable to native English-speaking peers. To attain the English proficiency level of their native English-speaking peers, further linguistic enhancement and refinement are necessary.

Adapted with permission from the California Department of Education's English Language Development Standards: for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade 12, July 1999.

Determining Students' English Language Proficiency Levels

A language minority student's English language proficiency level is determined by assessing his or her listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension with a formal English Language Proficiency instrument. It is not an arbitrary assignment made at a single moment in time.

Assessing only a student's oral capacity will not supply you with adequate or accurate information regarding his or her academic performance in the classroom. Further, being able to socially communicate in English with seeming proficiency is not an accurate predictor for commensurate performance in English reading and writing. Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension are interrelated domains, and all these elements must be considered in arriving at an appropriate English Language Proficiency level.

For more information regarding the approved English Language Proficiency instruments, please contact the Indiana Department of Education's Language Minority and Migrant Programs at (317) 232-0555 or (800) 382-9962.

Elements to Consider:

Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Comprehension

The Council of Chief State School Officers defines fluent English proficiency in its 1992 publication, *Summary of Recommendations and Policy Implications for Improving the Assessment and Monitoring of Students With Limited English Proficiency*.

A Fluent English Proficient (FEP) student is one who demonstrates abilities in all four language skills (domains), as follows:

Listening

The ability to understand the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional discourse through which teachers provide information.

Speaking

The ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively in learning activities within the classroom and in social interactions within the school.

Reading

The ability to comprehend and interpret content-area text at the age- or grade- appropriate level.

Writing

The ability to produce written text with content and format, fulfilling classroom assignments at the age- or grade- appropriate level.

At each proficiency level, specific performance indicators can be elicited and expected from language minority students to demonstrate their competence within an ELP Standard. The performance indicators incorporate the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The performance indicators for each standard are broken down into the following ELP levels:

*Beginner (Level 1) Early Intermediate (Level 2) Intermediate (Level 3) Advanced (Level 4)
Fluent English Proficient (Level 5)*

These performance expectations take into consideration the grade level of the language minority student (e.g., asking an ESL student who is Advanced (Level 4) at the Kindergarten level to produce a sophisticated essay with well-developed paragraphs would not be as appropriate as it would be in Grade 11).